CIHR—Institute of
Population & Public Health

CIHR IRSC

September 2007
Issue 14

Message from the Scientific Director

We are very pleased to release this issue of POP News at the 2007 Canadian Public Health Association's (CPHA) Annual Conference, *Public Health in Canada: from Politics to the People*. IPPH enthusiastically supports this important opportunity to showcase innovative population and public health research and facilitate knowledge exchange in collaboration with CPHA, the Canadian Population Health Initiative (CIHI-CPHI), the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) and the Ontario Public Health Association (OPHA), and the first Geomatics Conference.

In this issue, we profile the work of one of the Population and Public Health Student Award recipients, Sharon Kirkpatrick, and would like to take this opportunity to congratulate all of this year's award winners. We also highlight exciting and stimulating events that IPPH was pleased to support over the last few months. These include the 6th Annual IPPH and Institute of Health Services and Policy Research (CIHR-IHSPR) Summer Institute, hosted this year by Dr. Penny Hawe, that focused on population health intervention research, and a CIHR *Café Scientifique* held in Halifax that provided an opportunity for researchers to exchange with the public about the health of our cities.

We are also pleased to inform you that the WHO *Interim Statement of the Commission on Social Determinants of Health* was released earlier this month. It sets out the Commission's vision and goals, the problems it seeks to address, and the intellectual foundation for a social determinants approach. Recommendations for action will be included in the Final Report in May 2008. For additional information, please see the Commission website at : www.who.int/social_determinants/en/index.html .

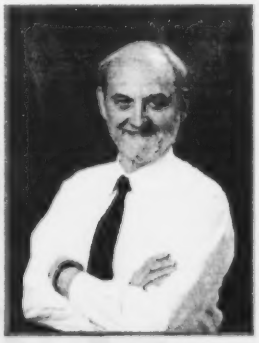
This issue also features the National Collaborating Centre for Methods and Tools (NCCMT). What an exciting time for population and public health research and policy!

Please also take note of our current funding opportunities on page 7 of this issue.

Enjoy the conference!

Warm regards,

John Frank
Scientific Director



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Summer Institute 2007

The joint Institute of Population and Public Health (IPPH) - Institute of Health Services and Policy Research (IHSPR) annual Summer Institute brings together top graduate students, post-doctoral fellows, researchers and decision-makers from across Canada, and from a variety of disciplines, for a unique, four day training opportunity. Designed to provide a complementary learning experience to what students are already receiving through their academic institutions, this year 30 graduate students were accepted from 120 applications from across the country.

Marking the 6th anniversary of the Summer Institute initiative, this year's Summer Institute was hosted from June 24-27 in Banff, Alberta, by the Population Health Intervention Research Centre at the University of Calgary. Dr Penny Hawe heads up the PHIR Centre. Her team designed and hosted the 2007 Summer Institute with support from IPPH and IHSPR, the Canadian Institute for Health Information and the Public Health Agency of Canada, and with input from faculty at universities across Canada.

The CIHR Summer Institute Graduating Class
On Population Health Intervention Research
Banff, 24th-27th June 2007

This year's Summer Institute topic was Population Health Intervention Research (PHIR): Creating New Ways Forward. Among the types of questions addressed were: How do we get evidence about prevention into the everyday decision-making of people who allocate health dollars? And, what type of research is needed to shine the light on broad-based prevention instead of individual-level cure? Over four days, students participated in five types of teaching sessions: PHIR 101 (basic introduction to methods and terms); Issues and case studies in PHIR (including social policy evaluation, natural experiments, consumer involvement, ethics, etc); Cool tools (e.g., tools for knowledge translation); In the Spotlight (where intervention researchers and decision-makers were interviewed to shed light to students on pivotal moments and career choices, what makes them tick, and what keeps them going); and group work. Students also had ample networking opportunities, including a chance to meet Ian Potter, Assistant Deputy Minister of the First Nations and Inuit Health Branch of Health Canada.

As part of the group work, students were asked to come up with a strategy to increase the quantity of population health intervention research in Canada, its quality, and its use by decision-makers. Dr Hawe explained, "This was no hypothetical exercise. Canada is developing a national initiative on this and we want the students' role in it to be front and centre." Indeed, knowledge translation and intervention research – getting research evidence into practice – were central themes at this year's Summer Institute. It appears that this was appreciated by the students: Andrea Smith, a MSc student in Community Health and Epidemiology at Dalhousie University, commented, "The highlight of the Institute were the opportunities to engage with leading researchers in the field of population health intervention research. For me, a key lesson was the importance of involving policy-makers and other vested parties early on in a research program. Too often, knowledge translation appears merely as an add-on, something to be done after the research is completed. Yet so many more avenues for applying research arise when policy makers are engaged early on in the research process."

Other students echoed Andrea's enthusiasm for and appraisal of the Summer Institute. Enette Pauze, a PhD student in the Department of Health Policy, Management and Evaluation at the University of Toronto, remarked, "The Summer Institute was an excellent opportunity for students and mentors sharing an interest in enhancing the capacity and quality of Canadian PHIR to learn from, with and about each other in a truly interdisciplinary environment. The event expanded my understanding of key theories, concepts and tools ... and provided the motivation and guidance for moving forward in my own research." Catherine Mah, also a PhD student in the same department, stated, "The CIHR Summer Institute was a remarkable opportunity to connect with fellow scholars and established researchers in a rigorous workshop setting. I found the small group work particularly rewarding. I very much look forward to sustaining and building upon relationships founded at the Institute through future research collaborations. I have returned from the Institute invigorated about my own research and newly optimistic about my plans for an academic research career." And across the country in British Columbia, Shannon Berg, a PhD student in the Department of Health Care and Epidemiology at the University of British Columbia reflected, "It will help me both in my doctoral research and in my real job at Vancouver Coastal Health... the concepts I have learned at Summer Institute are so transferable."

The Summer Institute is an annual event co-hosted by IPPH and IHPSR. Next year's theme will centre on Knowledge Translation. Please stay tuned for further news.

re above story, see contact info on page 3 ...

2007 Population and Public Health (PPH) Student Awards & Dr. John Hastings CPHA Student Award

The Institute of Population and Public Health (IPPH), in partnership with the Canadian Public Health Association (CPHA), the Canadian Population Health Initiative (CPHI), and the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) are pleased to announce the results of the 2007 Population and Public Health & Dr. John Hastings CPHA Student Awards Program. The award winning research abstracts represent diverse topics in Population and Public Health (PPH) research, especially as they relate to the 2007 CPHA Conference theme: "Public Health in Canada: From Politics to the People" and conference subthemes.

Dr. John Hastings CPHA Student Award:
Kate Bassil, a Ph.D. student in the Department of Public Health Sciences at the University of Toronto, for her environmental health themed abstract "Development of a surveillance system for heat-related illness using 911 medical dispatch data".

PhD Level PPH Student Awards:
Randall Fransoo, a Ph.D. student in the Department of Community Health Sciences at the University of Manitoba for his abstract, "How health status at birth and through childhood affects children's progress and performance in school: A population-based study".

Laura Rosella, a Ph.D. student in the Department of Public Health Sciences at the University of Toronto for her abstract, "Validation of a population-based risk algorithm for the development of physician-diagnosed Diabetes".

Masters Level PPH Student Awards:
Shira Goldenberg a Master's student in the Department of Health Care and Epidemiology at the University of British Columbia for her abstract titled "Sexually transmitted infection (STI) testing among youth in a Boomtown: The need for innovative, place-based approaches to STI control".

Katrina Plamondon a Master's student in the Department of Community Health and Epidemiology at the University of Saskatchewan for her abstract "Sustainable capacity building; A qualitative exploration of the Global Fund and Tuberculosis in Nicaragua".

This is the fourth year that the awards, which are intended to recognize excellence in Masters and PhD level population and public health research and its application in Canada, have been offered at the CPHA conference. In addition to a cash prize, the awards provide an opportunity for students to present their research at the Annual CPHA Conference to be held in Ottawa from September 16-19, 2007, and to have their research published in a special insert of the Canadian Journal of Public Health.

For more information about the awards and conference, visit the CPHA conference website : www.conference.cpha.ca/en/index.html

PPH Student Awards in conjunction with the 2007 IUHPE Conference

The CIHR Institute of Population and Public Health (IPPH), The Canadian Public Health Association (CPHA), the Canadian Institute for Health Information-Canadian Population Health Initiative (CIHI-CPHI) and the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) also offered Population and Public Health (PPH) Student Awards, in conjunction with the 2007 IUHPE Conference. The awards were established to recognize excellence in population and public health (PPH) research and their application to policy and practice, conducted by Masters and PhD level students enrolled in Canadian academic institutions.

The 2007 award winners were:
Sharon Kirkpatrick - Sharon, a PhD student in the Department of Nutritional Sciences at the University of Toronto, received an award for her project entitled, "The influence of housing circumstances and the local area food environment on families' food security." (see her article - page 4)

Brian Evoy - Brian, a doctoral candidate in the Individual Interdisciplinary Studies Graduate Program (IISGP) at the University of British Columbia, received an award for his project entitled, "Civil Society: What deliberative democrats can tell advocates about how to build public commitment to the health promotion agenda(s)."

Meghan Day – Meghan, a Master's student with the School of Physical Education at the University of Victoria, received an award for her project entitled, "Schools! BC – Healthy Eating: A Whole-School Healthy Eating Initiative."

Cathy Gladwin – Cathy, currently working on her Master's in Health Promotion at the University of Alberta, received an award for her project entitled, "Public Policy Processes and Getting Physical Activity into Alberta's Schools."

Congratulations!

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For more information on the **Population Health Intervention Research Initiative for Canada**, visit the website at: www.cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/33515.html

For more information on the 2008 **IPPH-IHSPR Summer Institute**, please contact:

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Data Collection in High-Poverty Toronto Neighbourhoods: Challenges and Learnings

By **Sharon Kirkpatrick**

As a doctoral candidate in the Department of Nutritional Sciences at the University of Toronto, I have been very fortunate to have had a range of research experiences. The foundation of my thesis, which focuses on the examination of factors influencing vulnerability to food insecurity (broadly defined as limited access to adequate food) among low-income Canadians, is a series of secondary analyses of national expenditure and health survey datasets. Although these projects have provided insights into the sociodemographic predictors of food insecurity and its implications for nutritional health, a fuller understanding of the factors that underpin vulnerability to food insecurity is needed to inform the development of effective policy and program interventions. Thus, in collaboration with my advisor Valerie Tarasuk and co-investigators David Hulchanski and Elaine Power, I have also undertaken a study involving primary data collection and analysis to examine the role of housing and neighbourhood characteristics in mediating vulnerability to food insecurity among low-income families.

The main component of this study, which is funded by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, is a cross-sectional survey of respondents from 500 low-income families, recruited door-to-door in 12 high-poverty Toronto neighbourhoods. To foster rapport with potential respondents, recruitment and survey interviewing were conducted by interviewers who themselves have first-hand experience of low income. The information collected included household sociodemographic characteristics; food acquisition, food supplies, and food security; housing circumstances; participation in community food programs (e.g, food banks, community kitchens and gardens); and other strategies used in the face of food shortages. The cross-sectional survey was complemented by mapping food retail and community food programs in each neighbourhood, allowing us to examine the importance of proximity to these amenities to food insecurity. A qualitative component is also being conducted by other members of the study team to gain a better understanding of how families make decisions about food acquisition in the context of low income.

The inclusion of a primary study of this scale and nature in my PhD work has been daunting at times. However, the process of designing and implementing the study has afforded me with unique training opportunities. For example, creating the survey instrument offered the advantage of not being limited to the measures collected by a secondary source, but also the difficulty of deciding what should be included and what needed to be excluded in order to keep the interviews to a reasonable length of time. The study also offered the opportunity to work with a diverse team. One of the most fascinating experiences has been observing the evolution of the interviewers, who were hired partly on the basis of their first-hand experience of low income and who didn't necessarily have previous research experience. Complicating matters, there was little in the literature to guide the implementation of a door-to-door survey in high-poverty neighbourhoods. As a result, there was the lingering possibility that the recruitment strategy would not be successful, in addition to safety concerns given that the study was conducted in neighbourhoods that are known not only for their high rates of poverty but also, at least in some cases, high rates of violent crime. However, the interviewers enthusiastically took on their tasks and were soon providing ideas and solutions which helped us to gain entry into neighbourhoods and buildings, identify strategies to ensure their safety, refine the survey instrument, and address early recruitment issues. The level of skill that the interviewers developed is surely one of the primary reasons for the success of this study, highlighting the value of including members of the community in this type of research. Another interesting element of the study was the interviewers' sharing of first-hand accounts of the survey participants' experiences. For example, beyond the responses to our survey questions, hearing about the inadequate housing conditions of a particular family or the strategies a mother was using to try to get food for her kids gave a new level of meaning to the data and the analysis compared to my secondary analysis work.

Data analysis is now underway and has revealed a high level of vulnerability to food access problems among this sample. Food insecurity is evident among almost two-thirds of families and is positively associated with declining after-shelter income and reliance on welfare. Almost half of families indicated problems affecting children, ranging from feeding them only a few low-cost foods to children not having enough to eat. Rates of participation in food banks, community kitchens, and gardens are low, as is participation in children's food programs. Although these food programs are currently the primary response to problems of food insecurity in Canada, these findings raise questions about their relevance and appropriateness. In contrast, the use of strategies such as delaying payment of bills or rent to free up money for food is relatively common, and as the food security situation worsens, families invoke more and more desperate measures in an effort to cope. Further analyses will yield an understanding of the interrelationship between housing, neighbourhood characteristics and food security among low-income families and will inform the development of a framework for the evaluation of housing and income support policies from the perspective of their impact on household food security. Further insights will be gleaned from the one-year follow-up interviews that we are currently conducting with the survey sample to enable an examination of the extent to which food insecurity is a persistent problem among affected households and the factors that are associated with changes in food security status.

This research is providing insights that can be used to advocate for more effective policies and programs to ameliorate problems of food insecurity among low-income Canadians, and has afforded me with unique training opportu-

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National Collaborating Centre for Methods and Tools

by Donna Ciliska, RN, PhD, Helen Thomas, RN, MSc, Scientific Co-Directors, and Kathie Clark, RN, PhD, Administrative Director

Introduction
Enhancing evidence-informed public health practice and policy in Canada requires effective and efficient methods and tools. While the other five National Collaborating Centres for Public Health focus on specific public health issues, the National Collaborating Centre for Methods and Tools (NCCMT) is mandated to improve access to and use of methods and tools for knowledge synthesis, translation and exchange (KSTE).

The NCCMT is hosted by McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario. Like all the other NCCs funded by the Public Health Agency of Canada, the NCCMT is a national centre established to serve the practitioners, managers, policy-makers and researchers working in public health across the country. The NCCMT began operations in December 2006 and it was officially launched in May 2007.

Target Users
During the initial phase of its work (April 1, 2007 to March 31, 2009), the NCCMT will concentrate on supporting the work of the other five NCCs and the KSTE needs of public health managers and those practitioners who may have responsibility for assisting with knowledge translation in their organizations.

National Advisory Group
The work of the NCCMT will be guided by a National Advisory Group that held its founding meeting on May 17 and 18, 2007. The current membership of the group includes: Ray Copes, Vancouver, British Columbia; Lydia Drasic, Vancouver, British Columbia; Stéfane Gravelle, Brandon, Manitoba; François-Pierre Gauvin, Montreal, Quebec; Margo Greenwood, Prince George, British Columbia; Jeremy Grimshaw, Ottawa, Ontario; Geoffrey Gurd, Ottawa, Ontario; Sarah Hayward, Edmonton, Alberta; Larry Hershfield, Toronto, Ontario; Réjean Landry, Quebec City, Quebec; Tracy Lovett, Halifax, Nova Scotia; Ann McKibbon, Hamilton, Ontario; Bob McKim, Edmonton, Alberta; David Mowat, Brampton, Ontario; Laurie Parton, Yellowknife, Northwest Territories; Jocelyn Sauvé Longueuil, Quebec; Amanda Sowden, York, England; and, Eileen Woodford, Antigonish, Nova Scotia.

NCCMT vision, mission, goals and principles
In May, the NCCMT National Advisory Group approved the following statements of vision, mission, goals and principles.

Vision
The effectiveness and efficiency of Canada's public health system will be guided by the production, sharing and use of high quality evidence.

MissionThe National Collaborating Centre for Methods and Tools (NCCMT) will enhance evidence-informed public health policy and practice in Canada.

Goals
1. To identify, develop and evaluate methods and tools for the process of knowledge synthesis, translation and exchange (KSTE).
2. To improve the access to and use of relevant KSTE methods and tools for people involved in policy-making, program decision-making, practice and research.
3. To identify gaps in KSTE methods and tools and encourage researchers and others to fill these gaps.
4. To raise awareness of evidence-informed practice among those involved in public health.
5. To develop the capacity of those involved in public health to use KSTE methods and tools.
6. To build active and sustainable networks of KSTE experts and public health policy-makers, practitioners and researchers, as well as partnerships with other National Collaborating Centres and create linkages with their stakeholder groups.

NCCMT Principles
1. Work in collaboration and partnership with national and international public health and KSTE organizations.
2. Avoid unnecessary duplication of public health KSTE processes and products.
3. Be responsive to the needs of the other NCCs and public health personnel.
4. Commit to the provision of innovative, high quality, up-to-date KSTE methods and tools.
5. Provide leadership in the resolution of KSTE issues confronting decision-makers in public health.

Work to Date
Networking is one of the four primary functions of the NCCs. The NCCMT began its work by engaging in a broad consultation with the public health community and the other NCCs to identify the priority activities for the NCCMT. We also conducted a consultation with KSTE experts. The input from this networking process added to the lessons learned from the environmental scan conducted prior to the creation of the Centre.

Based on the review of the literature conducted for the environmental scan, the NCCMT has completed two syntheses of KSTE literature on the applicability and transferability of research to specific settings and the identification of tools for the critical appraisal of systematic reviews. The NCCMT does not yet have a website but as soon as it does, these papers will be available online.

Current Projects
From the literature review on assessing the applicability and transferability of evidence to local programs and settings, a tool is being developed to assist public health managers and planners with decision-making about program priorities for their communities. This tool was presented and evaluated at the recent NCC Program Summer Institute in Baddeck, Nova Scotia. When it is ready for distribution, it too will be posted to the NCCMT website and emailed to members of the target users' network.

Another major function of the NCCs is the identification of knowledge gaps. The NCCMT has a project that will abstract the research needs identified in systematic reviews related to public health and published from January 2006 to July 2007. The list of these research needs will contribute to the visioning process planned by CIHR-IPPH in early 2008.

Before the NCCMT undertakes to develop new KSTE methods and tools, we will conduct a survey to identify and evaluate existing KSTE methods and tools in public health. This project will be carried out nationally and internationally with the assistance of partners in England, Australia and the

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"Data Collection..." continued from page 4

nities. This study would not have been possible without the dedication and talents of the co-investigators, our collaborators at the City of Toronto Shelter, Housing and Support Division and Toronto Public Health, and the research assistants and interviewers. I am grateful to the CIHR Institute of Population and Public Health, the Canadian Public Health Association, the Canadian Population Health Initiative, and the Public Health Agency of Canada for recognizing this work with a 2007 Population and Public Health Student Award. I look forward to applying the skills I have acquired and the lessons I have learned through my doctoral training to further research aimed at addressing social, economic and health inequities among the Canadian population.

Please send questions or comments about this research by e-mail to : sharon.kirkpatrick@utoronto.ca.

"NCC MT..." continued from page 5

USA. Our objective is to develop a registry of methods and tools that will be readily accessible to practitioners, managers, policy-makers and researchers.

In partnership with the Health Information Research Unit (HIRU) at McMaster University, the NCCMT has initiated a project to develop and test literature search strategies to find studies of knowledge translation that will then be synthesized and disseminated nationally and internationally. We are working with Ann McKibbon, MLS, PhD, and a team of HIRU library scientists who are also conducting literature searches for NCCMT briefing papers being prepared on networking and knowledge management. These and other briefing papers will provide the foundation for the future work of the NCCMT.

For more information

In addition to the above projects, the NCCMT is building a network of people interested in receiving general information updates about the work of the NCCMT. If you want to be added to our database, please send an email with your full contact information to : nccmt@mcmaster.ca. Please include your title if you are in a public health manager or knowledge broker role and want to be included in our target users' database.

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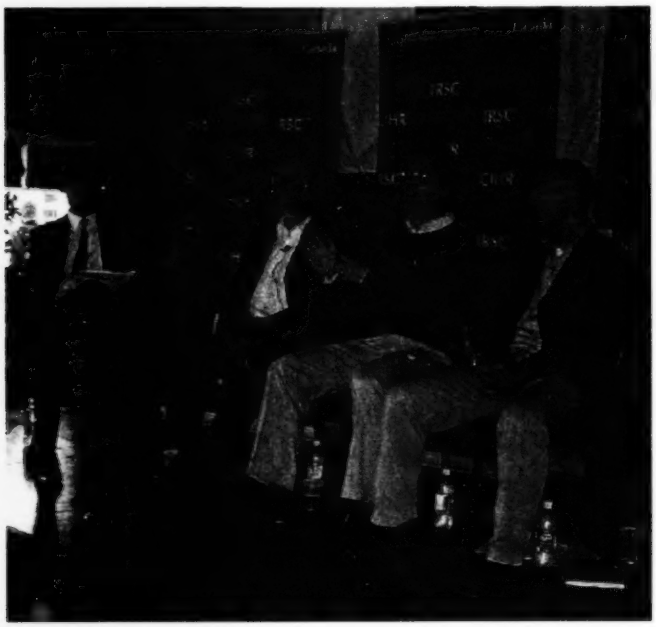
Café Scientifique : Are cities a health hazard?



From the left: Dr. John W. Frank, Dr. Frank Palermo, Dr. Daniel Rainham, and Mr. Andy Fillmore

The CIHR Institute of Population and Public Health recently hosted a **Café Scientifique** in Halifax. The sold out event created a venue for researchers to exchange with the public. On the topic of cities as a health hazard, experts and participants engaged in a discussion on how Halifax can keep growing, while keeping its citizens healthy.

Does urban design stop us from being physically active? Can better zoning prevent air pollution? Is a car culture inevitable in the 21st century? Should we be concerned that cities may be making us unhealthy? Those were some of the questions being tossed around during the two-hour long discussion.

This science on tap event gathered members of the public and experts: Dr. Frank Palermo, Faculty of Architecture and Planning, Dalhousie University; Dr. Daniel Rainham, R. Samuel McLaughlin Centre for Population Health Risk Assessment University of Ottawa; and Andy Fillmore, Project Manager, Urban Design Halifax Regional Municipality. The session was moderated by Dr. John Frank, Scientific Director of CIHR's Institute of Population and Public Health.

This was the third "Café Scientifique" organized by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR). For more information on CIHR's Café Scientifiques, please visit www.cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/33330.html .

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FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

Public Health Doctoral Research Awards and Fellowships

Jointly issued by the CIHR Institute of Population and Public Health (CIHR-IPPH) and the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC), the purpose of this priority announcement is to strengthen public health research capacity thereby supporting the next generation of public health researchers, and stimulating public health policy- and practice-relevant research across the country. Research projects with clear linkages to those who use and apply evidence from public health research (e.g. public health units/regional health authorities, federal/provincial/territorial governments, non-governmental organizations, etc.) and that are therefore relevant to policy and/or practice will be given strong consideration.

Global Health Fellowships

The specific objective of this priority announcement is to improve Canada's ability to investigate and intervene on those underlying forces that challenge global health, by enhancing, in a sustainable manner, the capacity of national and international researchers and research-users to collaboratively develop and apply global health knowledge for evidence-based public health practice.

Research Development and Knowledge Exchange in Population and Public Health

IPPH will fund meritorious knowledge exchange activities and opportunities for research development (e.g., workshops, environmental scans, researcher exchanges to facilitate joint research project development with/between IPPH-funded teams/centres/training initiatives) to facilitate collaboration among individuals from a variety of disciplines, backgrounds and roles (e.g., researchers and research users such as program managers, policy-makers and practitioners), with the objective of developing and/or enhancing:

- Collaborative research and knowledge exchange initiatives to address at least one or more domains of IPPH's strategic research and knowledge exchange priorities that are underdeveloped;
- Interdisciplinary networks of researchers and research users dedicated to addressing one or more of IPPH's strategic research and knowledge exchange priorities (across geography and/or discipline and/or sector);
- Proposals for regular CIHR operating grant competitions that are relevant to IPPH's strategic research and knowledge exchange priorities that might not evolve spontaneously without such collaboration, and that are likely to address pressing issues in the area; and,
- Consensus on priority policy issues and research questions in IPPH's strategic research and knowledge exchange priority areas, where such common understanding is currently lacking or requires further development.

For more information on current funding opportunities, please visit our IPPH website at : www.cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/13777.html .

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